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Improvements Needed In Program
To Contact And Assist
Recently Discharged Veterans B-114859

Veterans Administration

*UNITED STATES
GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE*

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JAN. 7, 1974



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

MANPOWER AND WELFARE
DIVISION

B-114859

The Honorable Donald E. Johnson 16
Administrator of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Administration

Dear Mr. Johnson:

This is our report on the Veterans Administration's efforts to contact and assist recently discharged veterans.

We found that the effectiveness of certain VA outreach activities designed to inform recently discharged veterans of their benefits could be improved.

2-6
Your agency has taken certain actions, in accordance with our recommendations to improve its screening procedures at the VA Data Processing Center, Austin, Texas. General agreement to other recommendations contained in our report has been expressed and corrective actions are being implemented or are planned. These recommendations are designed to encourage VA to (1) establish definite outreach goals, (2) improve its related management information system, and (3) reemphasize the need to fully use all available contact techniques. In addition, we are recommending that VA solicit and reaffirm the Department of Defense's cooperation in insuring that copies of all Reports of Transfer or Discharge for discharged servicemen are sent to VA.

We are sending copies of this report to the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs; the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations; the Senate and House Committees on Government Operations; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory J. Ahart".

Gregory J. Ahart
Director

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ABBREVIATIONS

DOD	Department of Defense
DPC	Data Processing Center
GAO	General Accounting Office
USVACs	United States Veterans Assistance Centers
VA	Veterans Administration
VSOs	Veterans Service Organizations

REPORT TO THE ADMINISTRATOR
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED IN PROGRAM TO
CONTACT AND ASSIST RECENTLY DIS-
CHARGED VETERANS
Veterans Administration
B-114859

D I G E S T

WHY THE REVIEW WAS MADE

In 1968 the Veterans Administration (VA) established the Outreach Services Program to advise all recently discharged veterans of benefits and services available to them.

In 1970 the Congress passed the Veterans Education and Training Amendments Act directing VA to give priority under the program to advising veterans without a high school education and, when possible, to contact them personally.

In doing so the Congress authorized VA to establish and maintain veterans assistance offices throughout the United States and its possessions.

GAO made this review to determine how VA has carried out its mandate to contact and assist recently discharged veterans, especially the educationally disadvantaged.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

VA statistics showed that:

--Letters were mailed to about 4 million recently discharged veterans from May 1968 through June 1973 informing them of their benefits and the nearest U.S.

Veterans Assistance Centers (USVACs). (See p. 5.)

--Thousands of additional letters were mailed to educationally disadvantaged veterans encouraging them to meet with VA representatives and to use available benefits and services. (See p. 6.)

--Representatives of VA and/or veterans service organizations (VSOs) interviewed personally about 247,000 of the 682,000 educationally disadvantaged veterans. (See p. 11.)

--About 65,000 educationally disadvantaged veterans applied for education benefits through fiscal year 1971. Approximately 7,900 obtained employment through VA efforts through fiscal year 1970. (See pp. 11 and 12.)

GAO's assessment of VA efforts showed that improvements are needed to make them more effective and to provide, to the maximum extent practicable, equal treatment to all educationally disadvantaged veterans.

GAO found that:

--Letters were not being sent to a significant number of eligible veterans because of improper eligibility screening criteria and

the lack of controls to insure that data on each serviceman was received from military discharge centers. (See p. 8.)

areas or in underprivileged areas. (See p. 13.)

--USVACs were unaware of many educationally disadvantaged veterans residing in their service areas and, therefore, special efforts to reach them were not made. (See pp. 8 and 9.)

--VA did not establish definite goals, and its management information system did not provide reliable data which could be used to assess the program's results. (See p. 11.)

--The results of VA efforts to contact and assist educationally disadvantaged veterans could be improved by more fully coordinating these efforts with those of other Federal, State, and local agencies and with VSOs. (See pp. 11 and 12.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Administrator of Veterans Affairs should:

--Establish definite goals for reaching veterans against which results can be measured. (See p.13.)

--Improve VA's management information system to provide reliable data to measure program effectiveness. (See p. 13.)

--Reemphasize the need for all USVACs to make full use of available techniques, such as coordinating efforts with other Federal, State, or local agencies, and VSOs, when practicable, or establishing other techniques to reach veterans outside USVAC service

AGENCY ACTIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

VA agreed generally with GAO's recommendations and plans to (1) redesign goals and procedures for USVACs, (2) revise its management information system to provide more complete information regarding these operations, and (3) continue to emphasize the need to make full use of all available techniques and resources to reach veterans residing outside USVAC service areas.

During its review, GAO recommended that VA revise screening procedures so that veterans are deleted from the system only when they have been positively determined to be ineligible for benefits. VA agreed with GAO's recommendation and has made changes to insure that, to the maximum practical extent, all potentially eligible dischargees are informed of benefits available. (See p. 9.)

GAO also recommended that VA establish controls to insure that the Department of Defense (DOD) notified VA of all discharged veterans and that USVACs be notified of all educationally disadvantaged veterans residing in their responsible areas.

VA said it has partially resolved the problem of incorrect mailing addresses on discharge records by establishing a procedure whereby USVACs are required to forward the record cards to the appropriate center when the veteran's new address is known. (See p. 10.)

Regarding GAO's recommendation to establish controls, the

Administrator said VA has no authority to enforce existing DOD instructions to discharge centers. He also said that within the next 3 years the planned interfacing of VA and DOD data processing records may ultimately provide more positive controls.

GAO noted, however, that DOD instructions to discharge centers which explained the importance of proper distribution of Reports of Transfer or Discharge (DD-214s) were issued in August 1968. DOD officials have informed GAO that VA has not discussed this matter with them and have indicated that certain controls over DD-214s sent to VA are possible, the value and costs of which would have to be evaluated.

Therefore GAO recommends that VA pursue with DOD the feasibility of

establishing controls over DD-214s transmitted from DOD to VA, rather than wait for planned interfacing of VA and DOD data processing records. If such controls are determined feasible, GAO recommends also that the Administrator solicit the cooperation of the Secretary of Defense to establish these controls until the planned interfacing of VA and DOD data processing records has been accomplished.

Until proper data processing controls have been established, GAO recommends that the Administrator request the Secretary of Defense to reemphasize to the various DOD discharge centers the importance of submitting a DD-214 to VA for every serviceman currently being discharged. (See p. 10.)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Veterans Education and Training Amendments Act of 1970 (38 U.S.C. 240) charges VA with the responsibility of establishing an Outreach Services Program. The purpose of the program is to insure that all veterans, especially those recently discharged or released from active military service and eligible for VA benefits, are provided prompt and appropriate assistance in applying for and obtaining such benefits and services so that they may rapidly readjust to civilian life.

The act specifically directs VA to:

- Advise each veteran by letter of available benefits and services with priority given to veterans with less than a high school education.
- Hold personal interviews to the maximum extent possible.
- Establish veterans assistance centers with regard to the geographical distribution of recently discharged veterans, their accessibility for educationally disadvantaged veterans, and the necessity of providing services in less populated areas.
- Make arrangements with other Federal agencies or private organizations to help carry out the purposes of the program.

Although the act formally authorized the establishment of the Outreach Services Program, VA, under its general authority to assist veterans, actually began the program in 1968.

DIRECT MAIL PROGRAM ESTABLISHED

VA has established a Direct Mail Program in which letters are sent to eligible recently discharged veterans to inform them of available benefits and to encourage them to increase their knowledge and skills. Enclosed with the letters is a prepaid post card, addressed to the nearest U.S. Veterans Assistance Center (USVAC), which the veteran can use to request assistance or additional information. Since the program began through June 1973, letters were mailed to about 4 million veterans.

VA statistics showed that in 1969 about 37 percent of the veterans responded to the letter. Statistics for 1971 showed that about 25 percent responded.

USVACs ESTABLISHED

USVACs were established to unify the combined skills, professional techniques, and resources of Federal agencies and groups providing benefits and services to recently discharged veterans. Under this concept veterans do not have to go from one office to another to obtain assistance. This assistance can all be obtained during one visit or stop at a USVAC.

The mission of these centers is to promote the highest possible educational achievement, facilitate rapid social and economic readjustment to civilian life, and further the achievement of a high standard of living and productive, satisfying life. More specifically, VA representatives at the USVACs are to personally seek out educationally disadvantaged veterans to motivate them to enter appropriate training programs which would increase their educational and/or vocational skills and opportunities.

As of June 1973, there were 72 USVACs, each State having at least 1. The District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, California, New York, and Texas each had five; Florida, Pennsylvania, and Ohio each had three; and Missouri and Oklahoma each had two.

At the time of our fieldwork, only 26 of the 72 USVACs were actually one-stop centers. According to VA officials other Government agencies have been reluctant to staff certain USVACs because of the small number of veterans visiting them for assistance.

USVAC service areas vary but generally cover the city in which they are located and, in some cases, the immediate surrounding area. Educationally disadvantaged veterans residing inside USVAC service areas are given priority action through a series of followup letters encouraging them to contact the USVAC and arrange for a personal interview. Thousands of these letters have been mailed since the Outreach Services Program began. VA considers a personal interview to be the best way to motivate educationally disadvantaged veterans to complete their education or training.

Since about 66 percent of the veterans live outside USVAC service areas, VA regional offices to which the respective USVACs are administratively responsible, are authorized to make arrangements for various veterans service organizations (VSOs) to personally contact these educationally disadvantaged veterans. VA records indicated that VSO participation was requested from the respective VSO national headquarters offices and operational directions were provided. Participation in the VA program, however, was generally left up to the VSO local chapters. Some of the participating VSOs are the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, and the American Red Cross.

In the event VA has not made arrangements with a VSO to contact educationally disadvantaged veterans residing outside the USVAC service area or VSO was not successful in its attempts to contact veterans, the USVAC sends letters to the veterans advising them of their benefits and encouraging them to contact the USVAC.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

We analyzed USVAC activity data under VA's Outreach Services Program from May 1968 through June 1973 and interviewed VA central and regional office officials concerning VA policies and procedures and VSO representatives concerning their roles in contacting veterans and placed emphasis on the efforts VA made regarding educationally disadvantaged veterans.

We performed our fieldwork during fiscal year 1972, at the VA Central Office in Washington, D. C.; the VA Data Processing Center (DPC) in Austin, Texas; and USVACs in Roanoke, Virginia; Winston-Salem; New York; Seattle; Portland, Oregon; Wichita; Oklahoma City and Muskogee, Oklahoma; and Washington, D. C.

CHAPTER 2

ARE ALL ELIGIBLE VETERANS BEING INFORMED OF AVAILABLE BENEFITS?

We found that VA did not advise, by letter, a significant number of eligible veterans of the benefits they were entitled to. We also found that USVACs were not advised of all educationally disadvantaged veterans residing in their responsible areas so that special efforts could be made to encourage them to take advantage of available benefits.

The Department of Defense (DOD) arranges to have a copy of the Report of Transfer or Discharge (DD-214) sent to VA's DPC for each serviceman discharged. At the DPC, the DD-214 is reviewed to determine if the veteran is eligible for VA benefits. If the veteran's DD-214 indicates he is ineligible it is discarded, and no further action is taken. If the DD-214 indicates the veteran is eligible, a letter is sent advising him of his benefits and the address of the nearest USVAC to which he can go for assistance. If an eligible veteran is found to be educationally disadvantaged, a card is sent to the USVAC nearest his home so that special efforts can be made to encourage him to use his benefits.

We found that the DPC was discarding DD-214s, although the veterans may have been eligible for VA benefits. For example, DD-214s were discarded

- because they were incomplete, illegible, or the wrong copy regardless of whether the veterans were eligible for benefits, rather than returning them to the applicable military discharge center for other copies; and
- for veterans who were given a general discharge, although such veterans were entitled to benefits.

For educationally disadvantaged eligible veterans, a card is sent to the USVAC nearest his home so that special efforts can be made to encourage him to use his benefits. At some USVACs, we found that cards had not been on file for many eligible educationally disadvantaged veterans who visited the centers seeking assistance. A USVAC official said that he realized the center should receive a card for each educationally disadvantaged veteran residing in the area but that he is not required to follow up to determine why cards were not received. He said also that cards may not have been received because (1) the veterans' DD-214s either were not received at the DPC or, if received, were not sent to the USVAC, (2) the veterans came to USVACs other than the ones to which their cards were sent, or (3) their cards may have been lost in transit.

Taking these reasons into account, we examined the records at the DPC for 463 selected veterans for whom no cards were on file at USVACs we visited.

Regarding the first reason offered, we found that discharge data for 114, or about 25 percent, of the 463 veterans was never entered into the system at the DPC. This was probably because either a DD-214 was not received or, if received, was improperly discarded when screened for eligibility.

Discharge data for the remaining 349 veterans in our sample, or 75 percent, was included in the DPC system, and cards should have been sent to USVACs. Information was unavailable to determine whether the 349 cards were not sent, lost in transit, or sent to USVACs serving areas other than the ones in which the veterans were residing.

We were able, however, to compare current addresses with the addresses shown on the DD-214 for 170 veterans at one USVAC. We found that 112, or 66 percent, of the veterans resided in the same USVAC service area at the time of discharge, and therefore the USVAC should have received a card. The USVAC official could not explain why he did not receive the cards.

CONCLUSIONS AND AGENCY ACTIONS

VA should make every effort to insure that eligible veterans are being sent letters reminding them of their entitled benefits. Such letters have had an impact on veterans. VA studies in February and July 1969 showed that about 37 percent of the veterans responded to the letters. A similar study in October 1971 showed that about 25 percent responded.

Also, if USVACs are to be successful in seeking out and encouraging educationally disadvantaged veterans to use available benefits, they must be made aware of the presence of such veterans.

On August 11, 1972, we discussed our findings with VA officials and suggested that VA insure that eligible veterans are not overlooked by (1) revising DD-214 screening procedures at the DPC to insure that all eligible veterans receive letters and (2) making certain that VA is notified of all discharged veterans and that VACs are notified of all educationally disadvantaged veterans residing in their responsible area.

Because of our discussion, VA made an internal review and took several actions beginning in August 1972 to improve its system. The screening criteria and procedures at the DPC were revised so that, to the maximum practical extent, all potentially eligible discharges would be informed of benefits available. These revisions should substantially correct the improper discarding of DD-214s.

VA stated that the problem of incorrect mailing addresses on discharge records has been partially resolved by establishing a procedure whereby USVACs are required to forward the record cards to the appropriate center when the veteran's new address is known. This action should insure that more educationally disadvantaged veterans are contacted. VA stated, however, that it cannot carry out any actions to insure that it is notified of all discharged veterans since such action is a DOD matter and beyond VA's control. According to VA, DOD has instructed its discharge centers to mail a copy of the discharge report to VA and, within the next 3 years, the planned interfacing of VA and DOD data processing records may ultimately provide more positive controls.

We recognize that VA has no control over DOD's activities but note that DOD issued instructions in August 1968 to discharge centers explaining the importance of properly distributing DD-214s. According to DOD officials, VA has not discussed this matter with them but the officials have indicated that certain controls over DD-214s sent to VA are possible, the value and costs of which would have to be evaluated. Because a large number of servicemen are currently being discharged who are eligible for VA benefits, VA should pursue with DOD the feasibility of establishing such controls as soon as possible rather than wait for planned interfacing of VA and DOD data processing records which may take several years to accomplish.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

We recommend that the Administrator of Veterans Affairs promptly initiate a study regarding the feasibility of establishing controls over the transmittal of DD-214s. If such controls are determined feasible, we recommend also that the Administrator solicit the cooperation of the Secretary of Defense to establish such controls until the planned interface of VA and DOD data processing records has been accomplished. Until proper data processing controls have been established, we further recommend that the Administrator request the Secretary of Defense to reemphasize to the various DOD discharge centers the importance of submitting a DD-214 to VA for every serviceman currently being discharged.

CHAPTER 3

SUCCESS OF VA'S SPECIAL EFFORTS FOR EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED VETERANS CANNOT BE MEASURED

VA had not established definite program goals for reaching veterans, especially those considered educationally disadvantaged. Consequently no meaningful comparison could be made between expected and actual results, and VA's ability to assess the effectiveness of its assistance to veterans and to identify problems has been limited. We found that actual results achieved varied among the different USVACs visited.

VA'S EFFORTS TO REACH VETERANS

We found that some of the data relating to efforts to help educationally disadvantaged veterans was inconsistently compiled. For example, certain USVACs showed more interviews given than veterans to be interviewed and some listed telephone or letter contacts as personal interviews while others did not. We found also that some USVACs improperly completed record cards which were to be used to show what motivated educationally disadvantaged veterans to visit the USVAC.

Despite these data weaknesses, certain reasonable conclusions can be drawn regarding VA's efforts to reach veterans.

VA data revealed that educationally disadvantaged veterans residing in the USVAC service areas received more personal attention than those residing outside the service area. From fiscal year 1968 through fiscal year 1973 about 231,000, or one-third, of the 682,000 educationally disadvantaged veterans resided inside USVAC service areas. Of these, about 196,000, or 85 percent, were personally contacted. Of the 451,000 educationally disadvantaged veterans who resided outside USVAC service areas, only about 11 percent, or 51,000, were personally contacted--most by VSOs. Applications for education benefits followed a similar pattern. Through fiscal year 1971 about 50,000, or 29 percent, of the educationally disadvantaged veterans residing inside the service area and only about 15,000, or 5 percent, of such veterans residing outside the service area filed applications.

Nationwide, USVACs' effectiveness in contacting educationally disadvantaged veterans varied from a low of about 5 percent to a high of about 80 percent. For example, of the approximately 19,000 educationally disadvantaged veterans identified at the Winston-Salem USVAC only about 900, or 5 percent, were contacted through fiscal year 1973. In contrast, the Hartford, Connecticut, USVAC contacted about 6,100

veterans, or 80 percent, of the approximately 7,600 educationally disadvantaged veterans identified.

We found certain USVACs did not make maximum use of techniques available to improve program results. For example, only one of the USVACs we visited had expanded its service area by having a VA representative regularly visit other nearby cities. As another example, VA informed us that it is VA's policy to coordinate USVAC activities, to the extent practical, with the activities of other Federal, State, and local agencies whose function is to serve disadvantaged groups in underprivileged areas. However, we noted that some USVACs were coordinating their efforts with such groups whereas others were doing so only to a limited degree. We found that certain USVACs and agencies were aware of each other's functions and were equipped with each other's pamphlets to distribute to interested parties. Some USVACs even used community action groups to attempt to locate educationally disadvantaged veterans.

There were also differences in the degree to which some USVACs have obtained VSO assistance, such as the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, in contacting veterans. It is VA's policy to obtain, when possible, VSO assistance in reaching veterans. However, VA statistical data for fiscal year 1973 showed that this assistance has not been used to contact veterans residing outside 21 of the 72 USVAC service areas. Representatives of some of these VSOs said that VA did not ask them to participate in the program.

Recently VA has purchased several mobile vans to tour regional areas outside USVAC service areas to try to contact veterans. Also VA is encouraging veterans to seek the assistance of their designated USVACs by expanding toll-free telephone service to areas outside the USVAC service areas. VA believes these vans and the expanded telephone service should help reach veterans who do not have easy access to USVACs.

NEED FOR INFORMATION ON EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSISTANCE FURNISHED

Information was not available to adequately assess the effectiveness of the assistance furnished veterans who did seek VA assistance.

For example, from 1968 through fiscal year 1970, about 7,900 educationally disadvantaged veterans obtained employment through USVAC efforts. We attempted to determine the number of jobs VA obtained for educationally disadvantaged veterans for subsequent periods, but VA had not compiled this information. We attempted also to determine the effect personal interviews had on the number of applications filled for education benefits, but appropriate information was unavailable. Also information regarding applications filed by educationally disadvantaged

veterans has not been compiled since fiscal year 1971. We further attempted to find out whether veterans were pleased with jobs or education provided through USVAC efforts but were informed that no followup was made to make this determination.

CONCLUSIONS

Management should have a system whereby the effectiveness of its programs can be measured and problem areas readily identified. Establishing definite goals against which results can be measured along with accurate and necessary data is fundamental to such a system. Goals should be developed to assess VA's Outreach Services Program, as well as the results each USVAC achieves regarding the number of veterans reached and the effectiveness of the assistance furnished.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

We recommend that the Administrator of Veterans Affairs:

- Establish definite goals for reaching veterans against which results can be measured.
- Improve VA's management information system to provide reliable information on the effectiveness of the assistance furnished.
- Reemphasize the need for all USVACs to make full use of available techniques, such as coordinating efforts with other Federal, State, or local agencies, and VSOs, when practicable, or establishing other techniques to reach veterans outside USVAC service areas or in underprivileged areas.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

VA stated that it (1) is redesigning goals and procedures for USVACs and (2) is planning to revise its management information system to provide more complete information regarding these operations.

VA stated that it will continue to emphasize the need to make full use of all available techniques and resources to contact veterans residing outside USVAC service areas.

The actions taken or to be taken, if properly applied, should place VA management in a better position to evaluate the effectiveness of the assistance furnished veterans and provide greater assurance that those veterans outside the USVAC service areas are encouraged to take advantage of the benefits available to them.



VETERANS ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20420

OCTOBER 11 1973

- Mr. Frank M. Mikus
Assistant Director
Manpower and Welfare Division
U. S. General Accounting Office
Room 137, Lafayette Building
811 Vermont Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20420

Dear Mr. Mikus:

With your letter of August 29, 1973, you provided draft copies of your report to Congress entitled "Improvements Needed in Program to Contact and Assist Recently Discharged Veterans." I appreciate the opportunity to review this report and comment on your conclusions and recommendations.

I must preface these comments by noting that your report is based on data obtained from field work during Fiscal Year 1972. As a result of our own internal review conducted in August 1972, we have already taken several actions to improve our system as you are now recommending.

You recommend that we revise the screening procedure at the Data Processing Center so that DD-214's are deleted from the system only when veterans have been positively determined to be ineligible for benefits. We did take action in August 1972 to revise these screening procedures. These changes assure that, to the maximum extent practical, all potentially eligible dischargees are informed of benefits available. We have since further refined the procedures and they are now almost entirely automated. Our new system does not screen out "general" and "unsuitable general" types of discharges as was done before August 1972.

[See GAO note.]

GAO note: Deleted comments relate to matters which were presented in the draft report but have been revised in this final report.

APPENDIX I

Mr. Frank M. Mikus
Assistant Director
Manpower and Welfare Division
U. S. General Accounting Office

Your second recommendation concerns establishing controls to provide assurance that VA is notified by the Defense Department of all discharged veterans and that our veterans assistance centers are notified of all educationally disadvantaged veterans residing in that area of responsibility. We cannot implement the first part of this recommendation at this time. There are literally thousands of servicemen's discharge points throughout the world. Instructions have been issued to all of the discharge points by the Department of Defense requiring that they mail a copy of the discharge report to the VA. Enforcement of these instructions is beyond the control of the VA. We do maintain close liaison with the military on this matter but we are unable to fully comply with your recommendation at this time. Automation of discharge procedures by the military and interfaced with VA computers may ultimately provide more positive controls; however, there are indications that this could not be accomplished within the next three years.

The second part of this recommendation regarding notifying veterans assistance centers of all educationally disadvantaged veterans is being complied with to the extent possible. We have partially resolved the problem of incorrect mailing addresses on discharge records by establishing a procedure to transfer the USVAC card to the appropriate center when the new address of the veteran is known.

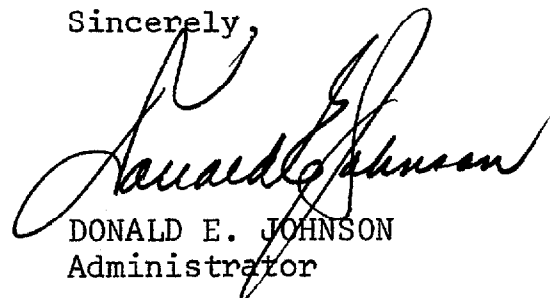
Your report contains several recommendations relative to the need for information on effectiveness of assistance furnished. While we appreciate the need to measure results, we also recognize that the impact of service-type programs is elusive of quantification. Effects sought do not always occur in measurable relationship to effort; effects may be so delayed as to be immeasurable; also, effects may have resulted only in part from the effort; e.g., lack of jobs may have influenced veterans to enroll in school rather than the letter from the VA. Nonetheless, we are redesigning goals and procedures for our veteran-service centers. We are also planning a revision of our management information system to provide more complete information regarding these operations.

Mr. Frank M. Mikus
Assistant Director
Manpower and Welfare Division
U. S. General Accounting Office

Your report points out that educationally disadvantaged veterans residing in the service areas of veterans service centers received more personal attention than those residing outside the service areas. This is a legitimate consequence of the decision to concentrate our activities where there appeared to be the greatest need - the metropolitan central core areas. The fact that 196,000 or 85% of the educationally disadvantaged residing in these areas have been personally contacted is, we believe, quite remarkable considering the task, the veteran, and the areas involved. We do recognize the need to expand service to veterans residing outside these service areas. We have made substantial effort to meet that need. The program of requesting veterans service organizations to personally contact veterans outside the USVAC service area continues. The VA is operating a fleet of ten mobile vans which to date have been used in 35 states and visited some 1,331 cities that are remote from our regional offices. We have also expanded toll-free telephone service to regional offices which now reaches 70% of the nation's population.

As recommended in your report we will continue to emphasize the need to make full use of all available techniques and resources to reach veterans residing outside USVAC service areas.

Sincerely,



DONALD E. JOHNSON
Administrator

APPENDIX II

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS
OF VA
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION
OF THE ACTIVITIES DISCUSSED
IN THIS REPORT

	<u>Tenure of office</u>	
	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:		
D. E. Johnson	June 1969	Present
W. J. Driver	Jan. 1965	May 1969
DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR:		
F. B. Rhodes	May 1969	Present
A. W. Stratton	Nov. 1967	May 1969
CHIEF BENEFITS DIRECTOR:		
O. W. Vaughn	Mar. 1973	Present
O. B. Owen	Feb. 1970	Mar. 1973
R. H. Wilson	July 1969	Feb. 1970
A. W. Farmer	Nov. 1967	July 1969
CHIEF DATA MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR:		
P. J. Budd	July 1963	Present
DIRECTOR, VETERANS ASSISTANCE (note a):		
J. P. Travers	Aug. 1973	Present
W. P. Hardwick (acting)	July 1973	Aug. 1973
J. G. Miller	May 1963	July 1973

a

From May 1, 1972, to Aug. 1, 1973, the position title was Director, Veterans Assistance and Administrative Service. Before May 1, 1972, the position title was Director, Contact and Administrative Service.

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